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Guest Speaker Remarks and Biographies
Sacramento Press Conference
20th Anniversary of National Girls and Women in Sports Day
34th Anniversary of Title IX
Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2006
(Available online at www.assembly.ca.gov/oropeza)

RUTHIE BOLTON, 38, of Sacramento: Head coach of women's basketball at William Jessup University, Rocklin; director of Fan Development for Sacramento Monarchs; founded Aim High Fitness and the Ruthie Bolton Foundation for Youth; one of 19 children; graduate of Auburn University of Alabama; played professional basketball overseas for seven years; former member of US Women's basketball team; winner of three Olympic gold medals; played entire WNBA career for Sacramento Monarchs; first player to have jersey retired. **CONTACT:** Carolyn Mitchell, Ruthie Bolton Foundation, (916) 729-4956 or carolyn.a.mitchell@worldnet.att.net

Topic to discuss: Equitable athletic participation, K-college.



Title IX opens many doors for us all. It granted me the opportunity against many odds to play at a great university, Auburn University, and to play in the Final Four. Most importantly, it paved the way for me to represent my country in the 1996 and 2000 Olympics. In addition, I played for two world championships and I was also fortunate to play seven years overseas and eight years with the WNBA.

Having achieved many of my dreams, I want to see as many young girls and young ladies as possible achieve their goals. I see great progress, even though there is still no comparison to the men.

Sports have been a great environment for girls. Stats show that girls that participate are less likely to drop out of school, get on drugs or get pregnant. It doesn't matter what age they may be. Being a part of sports is a win-win situation. We who have gone on before these young ladies here today have the responsibility of giving back. We can do this by coaching, being athletic directors, but most importantly as mentors.

That's why the Ruthie Bolton Foundation is trying to do all it can to be the light for them so they can one day achieve their dreams. Not only in sports, but life.

ARLEEN HAMMERSCHMIDT, 59, of Oceanside: Past VP of Girls and Women in Sport for the California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; 25-year girls and boys high school coach in volleyball, softball, swimming, track and field, Perris (Riverside County) and Oceanside; named 2000 California Secondary Physical Education Teacher of the Year; served on California Physical Education Content Standards Development Committee; University Supervisor, San Diego State University Teacher Education. **CONTACT:** (760) 722-2565 or or (760) 685-2565 or leenrhammer@cox.net

Topic to discuss: Historical overview of Title IX.



My name is Arleen Hammerschmidt. Included in what you see on the displays around the room is the pictorial history of girls' sports at one high school and community college in Riverside County, between 1963 and 1983.

They are evidence of the positive effect of Title IX.

In 1963, my senior year at Perris Union High School, the only athletic opportunity for girls was Tennis.

Even though athletically gifted and very interested, I was not able to tryout for the team. The Girls Athletic Association was the next best option. We had one field day 'competition' against Chino Women's State Prison.

In 1966, at Riverside City College, the Women's Athletic Association class was the only quasi-athletic opportunity for female students.

By 1973, one year after the enactment of Title IX, as a physical educator at my high school alma mater, Perris High School girls had two athletic opportunities: Tennis and Basketball.

Just six short years later, the effect of Title IX was obvious. For the first time, girls Volleyball and Basketball teams were in the CIF playoffs. Girls had Junior Varsity level teams in three sports. In addition to Volleyball and Basketball, girls teams were fielded in Cross Country and Softball. Still not equitable with offerings for boys, but many strides forward had been made and the girls' sports were flourishing.

The years 1978-79 were the same time the volleyball team held tryouts and the first two weeks of practice in the old gym. This gym, built in the early 1930s, had not been used for at least two years. Birds and bats inhabited the rafters and left feathers and droppings on the floor which had years of accumulated dust. Parents wanted to know why their daughters had to practice in this mess. Thankfully, this kind of blatant unfairness doesn't often happen to girls and women in sport these days.

Today, the disrespect and bias is more subtle but still hurtful.

In 1982, my last year with the school, and 10 years after Title IX, Perris High School girls had these athletic opportunities: Cross Country, Volleyball, Tennis, Basketball, Softball, and Track & Field.

Also on the displays around the room are photos of the California women who were the Title IX 'Movers and Shakers' of the 1970s and 80s. Please take a moment to walk back in time and gain an appreciation of the progress. Then let's get right back to work to make the sport experience completely fair to the girls and women of California.

MARLENE BJORNSRUD (b'yorns-rood), 52, of San Jose: CEO of Bay Area Women's Sports Initiative; past GM San Jose CyberRays women's soccer team; 20 years in athletic administration; past assistant athletic director, Santa Clara University. **CONTACT:** (408) 535-4832, or marlene@bawsi.org or Marlene.bjornsrud@sanjoseca.gov

Topic to discuss: Steroids and homophobia in women's sports.



My name is Marlene Bjornsrud. Fear is the greatest monster in sport. Every athlete knows that to go into competition with a spirit of fear will almost always lead to defeat. But many female athletes face two types of fears and live in secret trying to pretend these fears don't exist.

One is the fear of getting caught because they are using steroids or other performance-enhancing supplements.

In 30 years working with athletes in high schools, colleges, and with elite world-class professional athletes, I have learned that performance-enhancing supplements are an equal opportunity temptation.

They are not used only by male athletes.

Female athletes face the same pressures to be successful, to get a college scholarship, to compete on a national or international stage with an Olympic team.

Those pressures sometimes lead women down the path of using substances to enhance their performance.

Thanks to state Sen. Jackie Speier, we now have legislation in place to address this issue. Now we need education for coaches, athletic administrators, and athletes to ensure that those who play sports are healthy and play fair.

There is also a second fear that many female athletes face. It is the fear of “coming out.”

I am one of those who lived in the closet for 12 years before finally finding the courage to say proudly to the world that I have been with the same wonderful partner for 22 years.

Straight, world-class heterosexual athletes like Brandi Chastain and Julie Foudy have welcomed me, embraced me and empowered me to live an authentic, whole life. I want to use my gifts to make the world a better place for girls and women in sport.

But there are athletes who are lesbians playing every sport, coaching teams, serving as athletic directors, officials, and general managers who daily live in terrifying fear they will be found out and face discrimination and rejection.

Playing any sport is demanding. Playing a sport in the confines of the closet is exhausting. The energy expended to keep such an important part of oneself a secret takes a huge toll. The fear of discovery can be absolutely paralyzing and terrifying.

Lesbian athletes continue to be cut from teams. Suspected lesbian coaches are fired. Some coaches use negative practices against lesbian coaches to create fear in the minds of young recruits and their parents. Some schools have put in place “no lesbian” policies.

These types of homophobia must be confronted. Gay prejudice in sports must stop. The sports environment must be a place that is safe and respectful for all.

California has moved us miles closer to making sport a safe and respectful place for all. For that we can all be thankful. But legislation can only impact homophobic behaviors. Education will change homophobic attitudes.

Working together, leaders can create an environment where athletes can truly compete with NO FEAR.

KELLY LINDSEY, 26, of Walnut Creek: Head women's soccer coach, St. Mary's College in Moraga; former member US Women's Soccer team; played for San Jose CyberRays, helping team capture 2001 World Championship; Notre Dame graduate; assistant coach positions at universities of Colorado and Texas. **CONTACT:** (925) 631-4415 or kal1@stmarys-ca.edu

Topic to discuss: Increasing the number and experience of female coaches.



My name is Kelly Lindsey. I was very fortunate to have female role models in the world of sports. They helped me gain the confidence and support I needed to become a collegiate head coach at only 26 years of age.

I continue to find their value to young girls today in helping to garner an interest in participating because they've seen women succeed as coaches, officials and administrative leaders of teams and programs. I want to see our society hire positions with no regard to gender and simply employ the best person for the job.

But right now, women do not have as many opportunities to prove themselves. What they do have is the time, passion and energy to succeed and become the best.

California has always been a leader for such causes and I encourage the state to embrace and support equal opportunities for women in sports.

MONICA GERADO, 29, of Moraga: Assistant coach, women's soccer, St. Mary's College in Moraga; assistant coach, University of Pittsburg; member of Mexican National Women's Soccer team; won World Cup in 1999 and Gold Cup in 2000 and 2002; degrees in Sociology and Elementary Education from the University of Notre Dame; Simi Valley High School four-letter winner, All-League and All-State honors; **Los Angeles Times** High School Women's Soccer Player of the Year 1995; Mexican and Spanish heritage. **CONTACT:** (925) 631-4810 or mmg5@stmarys-ca.edu

Topic to discuss: Gender and ethnic sport-participation rates representative of students served.



My name is Monica Gerado. I was raised in the U.S. with Hispanic roots and have been very fortunate to represent my heritage as a member of the Mexican Women's National Soccer Team.

During that time, my eyes were opened to the lack of opportunity for many Hispanic girls. I saw that as they become young women, participation in athletics is frowned upon, as is having career goals. I was fortunate to have a supportive family, but others would greatly benefit from an external network that would help encourage and motivate women to see beyond cultural norms to the many available opportunities.

One strong avenue is through athletics, where women develop valuable life skills. California should embrace its diversity and become proactive in highlighting ethnic participation in sports by supporting programs such as BAWSI.

SHARON CLARK KELLEHER, 38, of San Jose: ParaOlympian, wheelchair tennis; captain of high school varsity soccer and varsity track and field teams; injured in auto accident while senior in high school, spinal cord injuries left her paraplegic; rose to star tennis player; world ranking in top 10 for seven years; national champion four years; Represented U.S. seven times at World Cup; BA Literature, Claremont McKenna College; Masters, Comparative Literature, San Francisco State University; serves on Athlete Advisory Committee of the Bay Area Women's Sports Initiatives.

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Topic to discuss: Equal treatment of athletes, including those with disabilities.



My name is Sharon Clark Kelleher. I grew up playing many sports, but was paralyzed as a result of a car accident in high school. I didn't want to give up sports, and I was fortunate to find a wheelchair tennis program in which to participate. And it has profoundly changed my life.

I began to focus on the future rather than on what I had lost. And I am not alone. Playing sports helps girls and women with disabilities gain self-confidence, a new appreciation for their bodies and a renewed passion for life.

Sadly, there are currently very few opportunities. Because sports have the power to transform girls into confident, assertive, and capable women, I believe that every girl should have an opportunity to play, and I hope California leads the way.

VENUS JAMES, 26, of Oakland: Played two years in Swedish women's soccer league; four years on UCLA soccer team; two years, UCLA track; played for San Jose CyberRays and Carolina Courage. One of a few players that has two World WUSA Championships. **CONTACT:** (510) 415-5980 or vpjames16@yahoo.com

Topic to discuss: Equal treatment of ethnic athletes.



My name is Venus James. When I started playing soccer in high school, friends and others told me that soccer was for white girls and I should just stick to track and field like other black girls. Sports should never be an issue of black or white. It is about having fun, creating new opportunities, making friends and being the best player one can be.

In 1997 I attended UCLA as a freshman, and I was one of the first African American women to play on the soccer team. The fact that I accomplished my

dream and received a scholarship to a Division I school seemed like a big feat to me.

Nearly a third of women playing basketball on a scholarship and a quarter of track athletes on scholarship Division I schools are black. {Racial and Gender Report Card, Center for the Study of Sport in Society, 2001}. By comparison, only 2.7 percent of the women receiving scholarships to play all other sports besides track and basketball were black.

The case may be that sports such as soccer, swimming, and golf are under represented by minorities. But all girls should have the choice and opportunity to play whichever sport they choose without being pressured to conform to what others think.

Minority athletes are breaking into predominately white sports. Venus and Serena Williams, Tiger Woods, and Michelle Wie are role models and inspiration for young people as well as minorities and women.

At the high school level, minority girls benefit when they participate in high school sports. A study by the Women's Sports Foundation in 1998 showed that African-American and Latina/Hispanic teenage female athletes experienced significantly reduced rates of pregnancy than female non-athletes.

Other benefits include improved confidence, higher self-esteem, time-management skills and healthier lifestyles.

Sports are also a stepping stone and tool for young women to obtain a college education. The positive influence of athletics doesn't stop once female athletes join their college teams. According to the 2002 Graduation Report for NCAA Division schools, black female athletes had a graduation rate of 60 percent compared to only 45 percent of black women in the general student body.

In my case, soccer was a definite factor in enabling me to get a sports scholarship to attend UCLA. While there I enjoyed the support of my coach, teammates and athletic department to help me through the challenges of being a student-athlete.

Sports have had a positive influence on my life and a major contributor to the woman I am today. The specific sport I played is not the issue, but the fact that I was able to follow my heart and play the sport I loved. Minorities

should not be railroaded into playing stereotypical minority sports. I am forever grateful for not listening to critics and going my own way.

NWAMAKA “MAKA” AGBO, 21, of Davis: UC Davis Track and Field Runner; began track in 7th grade; ended freshman year at San Luis Obispo High with four Northern League All League titles (100m, 200m, 4x100m, 4x400m); holds school record in the 4x400m; varsity volleyball and basketball; varsity cross-country senior year; walked onto UC Davis Track and Field team sophomore year. CONTACT: (805) 234-3145 or ncagbo@ucdavis.edu

Topic to discuss: Implementing Title IX in colleges.



People always ask me “What would you do if you didn’t do track?” To this day I still have not been able to answer that question. I would be a completely different person if track and field were not a part of my life. As a UC Davis student athlete I have earned opportunities and experiences that I would not have been exposed to under different circumstances. Athletics acts as a tool with which to develop females not only physically, but mentally and emotionally as well.

As I end my collegiate career this spring, one of the things that I am most thankful for is the confidence that being a female student athlete has given me.

All the challenges that we, as females, face in our sports are obstacles that we may encounter in our everyday lives. Walking onto a collegiate track team after a year long break proved to be one of the hardest things that I have ever done. The mental strength combined with the physical conditioning showed me just what I could achieve if I really set my mind to it. As an athlete I have learned what dedication and drive can achieve for a person that truly wants it.

“What would I do if I didn’t do track?” Probably not much.

BEGIN EXTENDED REMARKS

Being an athlete has also taught me how to appreciate my body. In order to compete at the best of my ability I have to closely watch how I take care of myself. This includes everything from what I eat and drink to how much

sleep I get at night. As we develop as athletes, our bodies grow according to the demands that we place on them in order to remain competitive. And as I have witnessed my body grow over the years, I have learned to celebrate these changes because they are making me more competitive and better adapted to my events. My love for track and field has taught me how to love my body.

As a student-athlete I have benefited from the numerous resources made available to us, like counseling and tutoring.

Without sports I definitely would not be the independent and confident person that I am today. I believe that the opportunity to participate in sports is extremely important to females today because there are too many things in society trying to break us down as women, we need something to build us up.

ROCIO MUNOZ, 13, of Sacramento: Eighth-grade student, Foothill Farms Junior High School; plays for school's volleyball team. **CONTACT:** (916) 339-3020.

Topic to discuss: How sports influenced her life.

My experiences in volleyball were both good and bad. I got to learn a great deal about leadership and other skills. Some of them were that you have to be a good sport even if you lose and you always have to be a positive person if you want to play. Positive thinking is the key on the road to success.

In my opinion one of the bad parts was "losing." But I learned that losing was also good. It made you push yourself to the limit, to be the best so you can win.

Also, playing volleyball has provided me with some valuable qualities and experiences. Some of them were determination, being able to connect with different students and different schools, and sharing and comparing your ideas with teammates.

In conclusion, playing volleyball has been a great experience. There are ups and downs, but we had fun and enjoyed the sport.

KATE HENNESSY, 28, Redwood City: VP of Girls and Women in Sport for the California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation

and Dance; physical education teacher, coach and athletic director at Corte Madera School in Portola Valley; Character Education director for Portola Valley School District; serves on Cal Poly Elementary Physical Education Workshop committee. **CONTACT:** (925) 788-7076; (650) 529-8553 (fax) or khennessy@pvsd.net

Topic to discuss: CAHPERD's five-year goals.

The Girls and Women in Sport Division of the California Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance organization has come up with seven areas that we would like to see addressed by the 25th celebration of National Girls and Women in Sports Day in 2011.



Among the goals:

- Hire more experienced female coaches, game officials and athletic officials.
- Improve access for females, K-college.
- Increased awareness of the dangers of performance-enhancing drugs.
- Equity regardless of sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability.
- Equitable media coverage of girls and women's sports.

Illustrations of our vision:

- Members of the girl's volleyball team will be taped before the football team because the girls have a match and the boys have practice.
- Girls Soccer teams have practice from 2-4 p.m. just as often as the boys team.
- A big, strong girl enters the weight room after school to train for her shot put and discus events and instead of receiving "double takes" and "jeers" from the football team, she is greeted with high-fives and genuine welcomes. We might even see the captain of the football team offer to spot her.

The complete list of the five-year goals along with additional illustrations of how they could be actualized is included in your press packet and can be seen on the poster behind me.

For more, contact:

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